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Implementation Plan

Natural Resource Conservation Education Program in the Northeast and Midwest

Fiscal Year 1992

Prepared by:

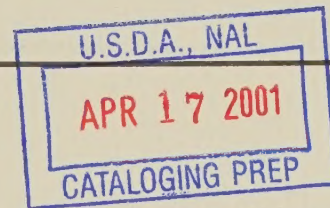
The USDA Forest Service
Northeastern Area
Northeastern Forest Experiment Station
North Central Forest Experiment Station
Eastern Region
Forest Products Laboratory

Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters
Cooperative Extension Service
American Forest Council
Project Learning Tree
Adirondack Park Visitors Interpretive Center
USDI Fish and Wildlife Service

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**



National Agricultural Library



Dear Reader:

This plan describes how the Natural Resource Conservation Education Program will be implemented in the twenty Northeastern and Midwestern states and the District of Columbia.

On November 16, 1990, the President signed into law the National Environmental Education Act. The Act is designed to increase public understanding of the natural environment and to develop and advance environmental education and training. The Act requires partnerships among Federal government agencies, local education institutions, state agencies, not-for-profit educational, environmental organizations, and private sector interests.

To help address this authority, the National Association of State Foresters encouraged the Chief of the Forest Service to form a task force "...to make recommendations to strengthen all aspects of the Natural Resource Education Program." The task force recommended establishing a Natural Resource Conservation Education Program jointly sponsored by the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. The Program was approved for establishment in February, 1991.

*Michael T. Rains
Area Director*

This implementation plan is tiered to the National Natural Resource Conservation Education Program while at the same time providing the required flexibility to address the unique contributions education in natural resources provide to the Northeast and Midwest.

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Introduction

On November 16, 1990, the President signed into law the National Environmental Education Act. The Act is designed to increase public understanding of the natural environment and to develop and advance environmental education and training. The Act requires partnerships among Federal government agencies, local education institutions, state agencies, not-for-profit educational, environmental organizations, and private sector interests.

To more fully address this authority, the National Association of State Foresters encouraged the Chief of the Forest Service to form a task force "...to make recommendations to strengthen all aspects of the Natural Resource Education Program." The task force, led by Dr. Mary Jo Lavin, recommended establishing a Natural Resource Conservation Education Program jointly sponsored by the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters. The Program was approved for establishment in February, 1991.

In addition to formally recognizing a National program, three additional directions were approved. These are:

- The National Resource Conservation Education Program would move from AWARENESS to INFORMED ACTION.
- Program emphasis would be on CONSERVATION.
- The program would be designed for LIFE-LONG LEARNING.

The need for conservation education has been addressed by several state forest resource plans within the Northeastern Area. The Governor's Task Force on Trees and Forests in Maryland called for improved public understanding of trees and forests. Many of the conflicts involving forestry today can be traced to a lack of understanding of basic forestry and natural resource principles, concepts, and especially the connections between human values and natural resource decisions.

The audience can be defined by six major categories: (1) preschool; (2) kindergarten through grade 2; (3) grades 3-5; (4) grades 6-8; (5) young adult and; (6) adult. It is important to reach all audience categories. The preKindergarten through 8 age group is where value formation is taking place and the greatest long-term impact can be made. The young adult age group will be making both individual career decisions and decisions about the use of our natural resources in the near future, and the adult population is making decisions today about the future of our natural resources. Each audience will need to be targeted differently and also need different teaching materials.

The program begins in Fiscal Year (FY) 1991 with a base amount of funding to initiate staffing and operations. In FY 1992, a minimum budget of \$2.5 million for the National Program has been approved. The program is targeted to be fully operational by FY 1993.

National leadership for the program will be established within the Forest Service in State and Private Forestry. The National level will be responsible for determining policy, fostering cooperation within and among agencies, providing guidance and counsel, and developing short and long-term budget proposals.

The National Program calls for the Area Director, Northeastern Area, to help coordinate the Federal role for State and Private Forestry in the Northeast and Midwest. Specific program leadership will be the role of the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning. Program implementation and accomplishment reporting will be based on the concept of a "Quality Circle" team headed by a Northeastern Area Natural Resource Conservation Education coordinator. Quality Circle members will represent the key partners in conservation education including: the State Foresters, Cooperative Extension, National Forest System, Forest Service Research branch, conservation leaders, and educators. Internal coordination within the Forest Service will happen through "The New Forest Partnerships." The New Forest Partnership program includes the Northeastern Area Director, Northeastern and North Central Forest Experiment Station Directors, the Forest Products Laboratory Director, and the Regional Forester. The purpose is to foster cooperation between the three branches of the Forest Service.

The Northeastern Area's Program will be closely coordinated with the Conservation Outreach Program as outlined in the "**Grey Towers National Historic Landmark, Five-Year Plan, 1990-1994.**" Grey Towers, former home of Gifford Pinchot, first Chief Forester of the Forest Service, is a National Historic Landmark managed by the USDA Forest Service. Grey Towers is managed to promote and advance conservation knowledge and action through the following four program areas:

- **Conservation Studies**
Identifies and seeks innovative solutions to emerging natural resource issues.
- **Conservation Outreach**
Increases public awareness about natural resource conservation.
- **Interpretive Services**
Interprets land use and conservation in America and interprets the Pinchot family in context of these themes.
- **Site Management**
Provides continuous stewardship for the historic resource.

The "cornerstone" for implementing the program will be "**State Strategic Natural Resource Conservation Education Plans.**" The State Strategic Plans are essential in coordinating what is happening in conservation education on a state-by-state basis. Flexibility will be very important as some states have more conservation activities already in place and it will be important to work with and build upon those structures and plans.

Program Goals and Objectives

The goals of the Natural Resource Conservation Education Program as defined by the National Program (NP) are to:

- NP1. Increase awareness, knowledge and appreciation of natural resources.
- NP2. Promote critical thinking skills that enable people to recognize the complexity of resource issues and to make choices within social, political, scientific and economic realities.
- NP3. Foster the individual's responsibility to conserve, preserve and wisely use our natural resources.

The following objectives will enable the Northeastern Area (NA) to achieve these National goals:

- NA1. Develop a mission statement and define goals and objectives for the Natural Resource Conservation Education program within the Northeastern Area. In developing this plan it became clear that much confusion exists as to whether the Forest Service and the State Foresters are trying to accomplish environmental education or conservation education and the differences between the two.
- NA2. Coordinate the completion of the state strategic Natural Resource Conservation Education Plans for the twenty states in the Northeast and Midwest and the District of Columbia.
- NA3. Identify a conservation education committee in each state. A primary task would be to coordinate completion of the state strategic Natural Resource Conservation Education Plan and inventory the conservation education programs currently in use. This would help to ensure education efforts serve both urban and rural populations and help focus on the six major age groupings mentioned previously (preschool, kindergarten through grade 2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, young adult, and adult).

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- NA4. Conduct a regional needs assessment to determine where the Forest Service and the State Foresters conservation education efforts can be best focused and where information gaps exist within the Northeastern Area by audience level. This would focus on regional needs not addressed at the state conservation education planning level.
- NA5. Expand the Project Learning Tree (PLT) and Project Wild facilitator networks. Provide facilitators opportunities for training in natural resource conservation topics, and encourage them to introduce educators to other appropriate conservation education materials. Investigate appropriate networks to reach the young adult and adult age groups.
- NA6. Link onto existing regional conference efforts on conservation education and consider sponsoring a regional conference for educators focusing on conservation education techniques.
- NA7. Coordinate a Natural Resource Conservation Education financial assistance program compatible with national guidelines. Since the national program recognized that local implementation is very important, an effort will be made to channel the funds to the state level.
- NA8. Coordinate Forest Service participation and implementation of the PLT revision within the Northeastern Area. Assist in revision/expansion of other conservation education materials as needed, especially materials aimed at the adult population.
- NA9. Utilize linkages formed through "The New Forest Partnerships" in order to coordinate conservation efforts between the three branches of the Forest Service located in the Northeast and Midwest. Encourage participation of all Northeastern Area personnel in the Natural Resource Conservation Education program by providing training opportunities and including conservation education as a component of an employee's duties. These duties should be recognized, funded, and maintained as part of position descriptions and performance standards where the employee and supervisor deem appropriate.

Program Components

The Natural Resource Conservation Education Program in the Northeast and Midwest will be implemented through four components. These are:

1. State Coordination

Includes formation of a state Natural Resource Conservation Education committee (or use of an appropriate existing structure), and completion of a state strategic Natural Resource Conservation Education Plan. Maintain cooperative efforts with facilitators for Project Learning Tree and Project Wild and other conservation education programs, and other projects designed to accomplish the priorities in the state plan. States will be given the flexibility to structure the distribution of financial assistance funding within the state.

2. Special Emphasis Projects

Using a financial assistance program, states and other clients may submit project proposals to compete for funds designated separately from the state program.

3. Federal Program

This component includes internal coordination within the three branches of the Forest Service (State and Private Forestry, National Forest System, and Research), coordination with other federal agencies, and training of Forest Service personnel.

4. Program Monitoring and Administration

Program monitoring will be done by key conservation and education leaders within the Northeastern Area who serve on the Quality Circle team. Program administration will be accomplished through the Northeastern Area Natural Resource Conservation Education coordinator. A key part of program administration will include developing a program accountability system that includes learner outcomes as well as numbers.

1. State Coordination

Although the major Natural Resource Conservation Education goals were established at the national level, it was emphasized that this program is to be carried out utilizing federal/state partnerships and other partner-consultants within both the education and conservation community. The key to this happening is the formation of a **Natural Resource Conservation Education Committee**. This committee should include individuals from the conservation and education communities who represent a broad range of natural resources organizations, several educational levels (preschool, school age, adult), and diverse cultures to meet the needs of both urban and rural populations. States are encouraged to utilize existing committees as appropriate.

One of the first tasks the Natural Resource Conservation Education Committee will need to address is the development of the state's **Natural Resource Conservation Education Strategic Plan**. The purpose of the state strategic plan is to clearly define goals and objectives for conservation education in the state. An inventory of existing programs will be important as well as targeting new material needs by audience. Partnerships between federal and state agencies with the conservation and education community are essential. States are encouraged to keep the plan brief and build upon already existing plans such as the state forest resources plan, the state stewardship plan, and the urban and community forestry plan. A sample state strategic plan outline can be found in the Appendix.

Other suggested needs that could be addressed in the state strategic plan are: a state conservation education conference, a natural resources conservation education academy funded through a foundation established for fund-raising, utilizing new technology to link programs together and as an interactive learning tool, addressing specific needs of the adult population, reaching urban communities, and the establishment of a mini-grant program administered at the state level to distribute smaller amounts of funding to the local level for purchasing curriculum materials.

Most states already have a network of trained Project Learning Tree (PLT) and Project Wild (PW) facilitators. Because each state's training and coordination of facilitators varies, the state strategic plan should address ways to expand the PLT and PW networks, provide facilitators opportunities for training in natural resource conservation topics, and encourage them to introduce educators to other appropriate conservation education materials.

State Coordination (*continued*)

Financial assistance dollars will depend on appropriation levels and final guidelines from the national NRCE program director. States are encouraged to be innovative in structuring the use of their financial assistance dollars. Partnerships with conservation organizations, education groups, private industry, and foundations will help stretch the limited federal funds.

State coordination funding could be distributed as follows: a fixed amount plus additional funding according to the percentage of population within the twenty-state area. Initial funding would be available to help with completion of state plans and program start-up including personnel, public awareness, and assessments. In the following years funding would be allocated for priorities designated in the state strategic plan. States are encouraged to establish criteria for distribution of state funds on a project basis. Criteria may include:

- Linkages to existing conservation education efforts,
- Partnership development,
- Innovative teaching techniques,
- Educator participation,
- Replicability,
- Matching funds,
- Multi-cultural participation,
- Continuity, program longevity,
- Demonstration of need,
- Evaluation criteria which include learner outcomes.

2. Special Emphasis Program

The Special Emphasis Program component is designed to have the flexibility to include both regional, multi-state, state, and local level proposals. This program component will receive a smaller level of funding than the state coordination component and is designed to fund those projects not funded at the state level.

Funding guidelines compatible with national guidelines will be finalized by the Northeastern Area Natural Resource Conservation Education coordinator with the Quality Circle team and will be similar to the suggested criteria for funding state projects listed above. Awarding of special emphasis project funds will be done in cooperation with the Quality Circle team.

3. Federal Program

In order to portray a clear and complete picture to the public as to what conservation education means to the Forest Service, internal cooperation will be important. Each branch of the Forest Service (State & Private Forestry, National Forest System, Research) has a unique contribution to make in conservation education. By working together cooperatively, we can reach more people and the public can learn more.

The Northeastern Area Natural Resource Conservation Education coordinator should work closely with conservation education coordinators from the National Forest System in Region 9, the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, the North Central Forest Experiment Station, and the Forest Products Laboratory. The linkages which began through the "New Forest Partnerships" should continue. Partnerships with other federal agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Soil Conservation Service will be important.

Internal cooperation can be facilitated through the Data General computer network. The State Foresters can easily be included here as they now have access to the Data General system. Developing networks between the natural resource professional and the conservation and education community will also be important. A natural resource conservation education network can be used to compile mailing lists, develop a skills bank which lists Forest Service employees interests and skills in conservation education, maintain a checklist of conservation education participation opportunities, and technology transfer.

An essential part of the federal component will be training. The wealth of natural resource professionals and other employees interested in conservation education need training in educational concepts such as learning processes by age level and measuring learner outcomes. The Forest Service has been "informing" the public about natural resource conservation for a long time. "Educating" the public or leading them out to move from awareness to informed action is a different process. It will be critical to include educators in this process.

One of the Northeastern Area's objectives is to conduct a regional conservation education needs assessment. The purpose of this is to more clearly define the Forest Service and the State Foresters role in conservation education, define what information gaps exist, and help target audiences. This will help define the Natural Resource Conservation Education program goals and information needs for future program development. The Forest Service research branch could be helpful in carrying out this objective. It is anticipated this would not be

Federal Program *(continued)*

initially funded as Fiscal Year (FY) 1992 funds will be directed toward the state committees, development of strategic plans, and special emphasis projects.

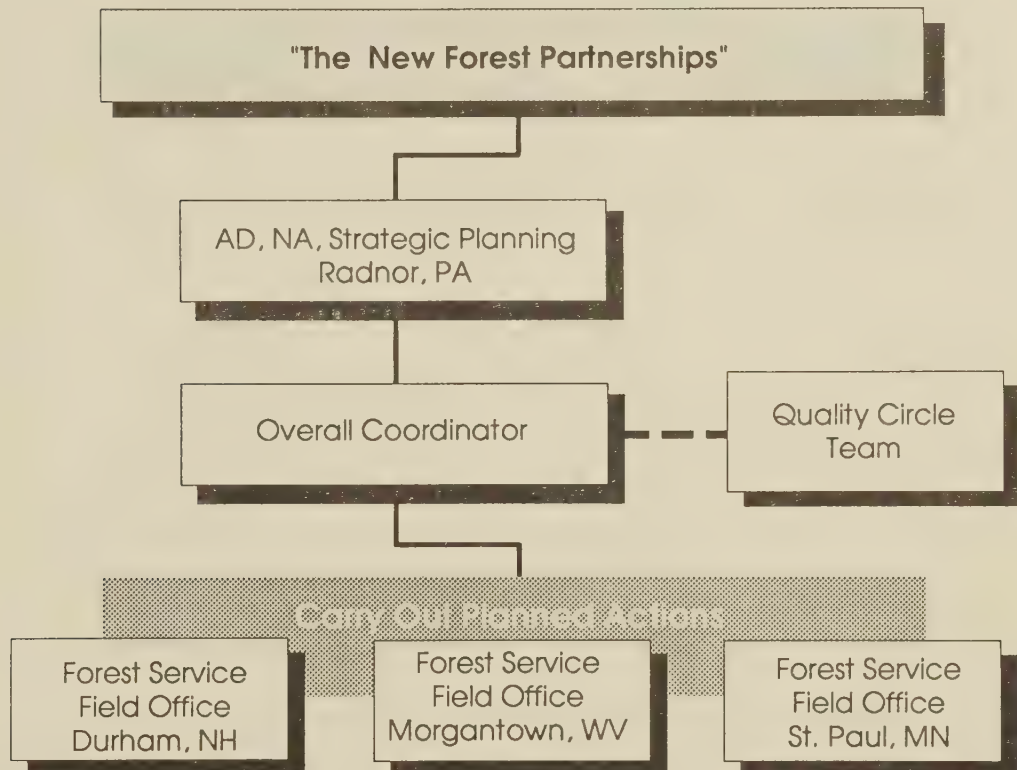
Finally, ALL Northeastern Area employees should be encouraged to participate in conservation education activities. It will be especially important to draw upon the diversity of our employees when reaching out to culturally diverse urban areas.

4. Program Management and Administration

The overall leadership of the Natural Resource Conservation Education Program in the Northeastern Area will be assigned to the Assistant Director for Strategic Planning, Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry. This position is located in Radnor. The implementation of the program will be assigned to a position in the Northeastern Area. The Assistant Director for Strategic Planning may want to use "**The New Forest Partnerships**" as a steering committee for the program since this has already established linkages between the Northeastern Area, National Forest System Region 9, the Forest Experiment Stations, and the Forest Products Laboratory.

Program Management and Administration *(continued)*

The overall coordinator will work very closely with the Quality Circle team. This will be a team of seven to ten members including representatives from state and federal natural resource agencies, cooperative extension, and other conservation and education leaders. This is to be a long-term working group intended to help with program direction and evaluation. Other key activities will be grant proposal evaluation and communication.



Monitoring and Evaluation

A Quality Circle team will develop a "Dance Card" to ensure program objectives are being met in a quality, timely way. A **Dance Card** is a matrix of team members and team products, designating each team member responsibility by product. As a minimum, an annual "**Status Report**" will outline accomplishments; define the current program; and provide an outlook for the future program. Other products may include legislative briefing papers, budget reports, and fact sheets.

Integration With Current Programs

A key linkage that must be made is with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recently established Office of Environmental Education. It is anticipated that an environmental education coordinator will be assigned to each one of EPA's ten regions. Partnerships must be made especially with those environmental education coordinators assigned to work within the Northeastern Area. The Office of Environmental Education will be involved in several activities of common interest including a grant program, youth programs, a national environmental education database, a national environmental education conference, environmental education intern and fellowship programs, and international activities.

Conservation education will also be linked to the Northeastern Area's major emphasis areas as outlined in our five-year plan "People and Forests: The Challenge of the 1990's." These emphasis areas include:

- **Stewardship**

Promoting the application of environmental and economic resource management principles to private non-industrial forest lands.

- **Forest Health**

Implementing an efficient forest pest management program through comprehensive monitoring of the forest condition.

- **Urban/Rural Interactions** (*Urban Forestry*)

Promoting the concept of comprehensive management of natural resources in urban and urbanizing areas.

- **Economic Development through Forestry** (*Rural Development*)

Stimulate economic development in rural areas through the wise use of forest resources.

- **Public Awareness**

Increase the general awareness of natural resources and their role in maintaining the quality of life that we enjoy in this country.

- **Work Force Diversity**

Develop a work force that is representative of the society we serve-philosophically, culturally, and socially.

In addition, linkages will be made with the Pinchot Institute for Conservation Studies at the Grey Towers National Historic Landmark. A conservation outreach program is a main component of their five-year plan. The main objectives include:

- Develop a public outreach program to increase the awareness of natural resource conservation, focusing on urban publics in the northeast.
- Create a national center at Grey Towers to distribute natural resource conservation materials developed by the Forest Service and other conservation organizations.
- Promote appropriate use of the Grey Towers site by the Forest Service and other organizations for meetings and conferences on conservation topics.
- Develop partnerships with universities, conservation organizations, environmental educators, and Northeastern Area cooperators.
- The Northeastern Area's Natural Resource Conservation Education Program will be coordinated with efforts at Grey Towers.

Budget Information

The following table illustrates the proposed funding requirements for the four components of the Natural Resource Conservation Education Program in the Northeast and Midwest:

Table 1. Natural Resource Conservation Education Program in the Northeast and Midwest, Planned Funding Requirements, FYs 1991-1995.

	FY 1991	FY 1992	FY 1993	FY 1994	FY 1995
<i>... Dollars in thousands ...</i>					
State Coordination	10	500	750	1,000	1,250
Special Emphasis Projects	0	300	450	600	750
Federal Program	5	100	150	200	250
Program Monitoring/Admin.	10	100	150	200	250
Total	25	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,500

Table 2 outlines how the \$500,000 in state coordination funds could be distributed. A fixed amount of \$10,000 would be given to each state for forming the state NRCE committee and development of the state strategic plan. The remaining \$300,000 would be distributed according to population for initial program development. Future state coordination funding could be distributed similarly (fixed plus additional based on population). Final funding allocation will depend on funds available and national program guidelines.

Table 2. Proposed state coordination funding levels by state.

	Fixed Amount (\$)	Population %	Additional Funds (\$)	Total \$
Connecticut	10,000	2.8	8,400	18,400
Delaware	10,000	0.5	1,500	11,500
Illinois	10,000	10.4	31,200	41,200
Indiana	10,000	5.0	15,000	25,000
Iowa	10,000	2.7	8,100	18,100
Maine	10,000	1.0	3,000	13,000
Maryland	10,000	3.9	11,700	21,700
Massachusetts	10,000	5.2	15,600	25,600
Michigan	10,000	8.5	25,500	35,500
Minnesota	10,000	3.7	11,100	21,100
Missouri	10,000	4.5	13,500	23,500
New Hampshire	10,000	0.8	2,400	12,400
New Jersey	10,000	6.7	20,100	30,100
New York	10,000	16.0	48,000	58,000
Ohio	10,000	9.9	29,700	39,700
Pennsylvania	10,000	10.8	32,400	42,400
Rhode Island	10,000	0.9	2,700	12,700
Vermont	10,000	0.6	1,800	11,800
West Virginia	10,000	1.8	5,400	15,400
Wisconsin	10,000	4.3	12,900	22,900
Total	200,000	100.0	300,000	500,000

Projected Accomplishments

Natural Resource Conservation Education accomplishments will include the areas of strategic plans completed; educators trained; numbers of clients receiving conservation education; curriculum material developed or revised; and special projects completed. The main program outputs for FY 1992 will be the state strategic plans and implementation of the special emphasis program. States may use any extra state coordination funds to begin educator training, curriculum development, and other ways of reaching clients. The number of special emphasis projects that get underway in FY 1992 depends on the final funding levels.

In addition to showing the estimated numerical accomplishments for 1992 and beyond, it is very important to consider some way to evaluate whether the Northeastern Area Natural Resource Conservation Education program is educating the public to make wise decisions on use of our natural resources and take responsibility and action concerning natural resource management.

The regional assessment listed as a Northeastern Area program objective and budgeted for fiscal year 1993 will be very valuable in giving the Natural Resource Conservation Education program direction within the Northeast and Midwest. The Quality Circle team needs to address how to measure the impact on the public concerning each program direction given in that assessment.

The awarding of the state grant dollars and the special emphasis funds should be tied to a measurable outcome for learner objectives. A simple pre/post course testing is an example. The exact approach will have to be defined by the grant partners. Documentation on the special emphasis projects including a synopsis of the project which outlines the partners involved and the learner outcomes will be extremely valuable information to make available to other partner-consultant client groups.

Conclusions

The current needs of the country include an effective Natural Resource Conservation Education Program. This Implementation Plan will provide a way to begin increasing awareness and enable people to recognize the value of America's natural resources and allow them to make better choices for the management of these resources.

This plan describes: the goals and objectives of an effective, cost-efficient program; its major components; an organization to coordinate work and monitor accomplishments; and ways to link education efforts to key forest management programs and other environmental and conservation efforts already begun.

This plan offers another dimension for improving and developing partnerships to carry out objectives of mutual concern in the Northeast and Midwest.

Appendix

Natural Resource Conservation Education State Strategic Plan

Sample Outline

REMINDER: Keep the plans simple and brief, build on what is already out there; a few achievable objectives are better than a long list of unattainable ones.

I. Introduction

Include a mission statement for natural resource conservation education in the state. A mission statement is a guiding statement intended to give broad direction. As an example the mission statement for the Missouri Department of Conservation, Education Section, Five-Year Program Plan states:

“Our mission is to provide user-friendly, formal education programs for education professionals, youth leaders, students, parents and citizens about forest, fish, and wildlife resources and the ecological base which supports them.”

Other key points to bring up right away are how conservation education fits into the environmental education network already on-going in the state, the targeted audiences (preschool, kindergarten through grade 2, grades 3-5, grades 6-8, young adult, and adult) and the key partners in conservation education in the states. Include the natural resource community as well as the education community.

II. Present Situation

An assessment of conservation education in the state, may include such topics as: inventory of current programs by targeted audience, distribution systems for programs available, mandates in place for environmental education, number of trained conservation educators, and current funding levels. Specific attention should probably go to how the adult population is currently being reached, training opportunities for both school educators and adult level educators, and partnerships already in place.

III. Goals

A goal states the desired future condition for natural resource conservation education in the state. There can be more than one goal for NRCE in the state. An example goal would be to "develop a mechanism that facilitates better statewide communication and collaboration between the diverse groups involved in conservation education."

Build upon the national program goals of increasing awareness, knowledge, and appreciation of natural resources by promoting critical thinking skills that enable people to recognize this complexity of resource issues and to make choices within social, political, scientific, and economic realities; and fostering the individual's responsibility to conserve, preserve, and wisely use our natural resources.

IV. Objectives

Objectives are the steps taken to reach the desired goals. There can be several objectives under each goal. Consider breaking down objectives by target audience. Objectives may include such activities as a more detailed needs assessment; training; distribution of materials; curriculum development or revision; recognition of innovative programs; networking including computers and newsletters; and a public awareness of NRCE program. Remember to build upon the Northeastern Area's objectives mentioned in this plan.

V. Program Evaluation and Review

Some type of evaluation should be tied to each objective. Numerical evaluations may be appropriate in some cases, in others an evaluation if learner outcomes are met may be appropriate.

The state conservation education committee will have over-all responsibility for evaluation of the state-wide NRCE program.

VI. Budget

Include funding of any personnel as well as funding of specific projects. Be sure to include matching dollars including in-kind services. States will be given as much flexibility as possible in distributing financial assistance funding. For example, if a large cap grant and a mini-grant program is necessary, criteria need to be established for fund distribution, a funding schedule, and monitoring of grants. The State conservation education committee will be accountable to the Northeastern Area as to how funds were spent and evaluation of project success.

VII. Conservation Education Committee

This committee will be responsible for putting together the state conservation education plan, monitoring the implementation of that plan, and providing direction for conservation education efforts in the state.

The committee should consist of representatives from:

- State and federal natural resource agencies
- Cooperative extension service
- Educators
- College/university-involved in education and/or natural resources as well as adult outreach
- Youth organizations
- Environmental organizations
- Inner-city interests
- Private and public outdoor classroom areas

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